

2025 AGM Advocacy Report

By Andrew Boden

It's been a very busy year for APSA's advocacy work. Seven years ago, I recall that my predecessor, Anne Mason, said that 75% of the executive director's role is advocacy work for you, our members. I feel that percentage has only increased in the last two years.

Based on the number of members served per month for advocacy work, we saw approximately 750 members, which is slightly up from last year. I note that some of that total represents members who have ongoing concerns and need to re-engage with us: obviously, some of our cases can go on for months or years.

Layoffs

Layoffs, very unfortunately, have occupied my team, our advocacy committee and our board for much of this year. In the past two years, about 90 members have had their positions eliminated. Advocacy work really doesn't end when someone loses their job — in some crucial senses, it only just begins as we try to get everything that we can by way of severance and other benefits for our members. In some cases, where the position elimination looks illegitimate, we file grievances. Of course, then we help those left behind, not only dealing with the grief of a colleague or colleagues losing their jobs, but also with their increased workload. This includes, especially, issues related to apparent inadequate compensation for overtime and taking on additional duties.

Termination without Cause

We are formally grieving two cases of termination without cause, which is a new tactic that the University claims it has the authority to invoke for APSA members who are "true managers." True managers are those who have significant managerial authority, which includes, for example, the ability to hire or fire without permission or blessing to do so from above. Fortunately, the number of true managers, per the definition of the Labour Relations Board, among our membership is quite small. Regardless, we feel that the University, in terminating our members without cause, is violating our AD 10 policies and Basic agreement, among others.

Bullying and Harassment

Also, unfortunately, the number of members approaching us with bullying and harassment cases continues to be high. It seems that the news about budget cuts, layoffs, and so on, plus the resulting job insecurity for employees who retained their jobs, has created low morale and, for lack of a better phrase, a gnarly mood on campus. The result seems to be more reported difficult interactions between employees on campus and/or an escalation of workplace tensions.

Of course, where we are aware that units or departments may have issues, we do bring these matters forward to SFU to avoid further workplace difficulties. I would like to thank Rana Hakami in the Bullying and Harassment Hub for her ongoing help and support of our members.

Ageism

We are actively pursuing cases involving members aged 65+ who have been denied the ability to join the SFU Pension Plan or to use long-term disability when needed. Both the SFU pension plan and the LTD plan are gate-kept by age: members who are 65+ at the time of becoming eligible for continuing work at SFU are typically denied entry into both plans. In our view, SFU has not apparently kept up with the changing legal landscape around potential ageism and eligibility for pension and LTD plans, among other benefits. Frankly, we are very eager to correct this issue for our older members.

Thank you

We couldn't do this important advocacy work for you without the generous help of our advocacy committee volunteers and our volunteer chair, Mike Peragine. A big thanks to all of you!

I would also like to thank my team: Lakshmi, Tracey and Aicha, three very strong and very intelligent women who have fought tirelessly for you, our members, day in and day out. I couldn't have a more able and dedicated team, and I am more than grateful to have the privilege to work with them all these years.

Lastly, thank you to all of you for continuing to have confidence in our advocacy work on your behalf.